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**Director, Membership & Legislative Services**  
**Connecticut Council of Small Towns**  
**Before the Public Health Committee**  
**March 2, 2016**

**SUPPORT - SB-297 - AN ACT AN ACT CONCERNING CHANGE IN USE PERMITS FOR CERTAIN WATER SYSTEMS.**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) *supports* the provisions in **SB-297** which narrow the definition of activities that warrant a “Change of Use” permit from the state Department of Public Health (DPH) to exclude activities that are performed to maintain or upgrade municipal water systems as well as other water systems.

Under the current permit process, DPH requires a change of use permit for anything that constitutes “one shovel of dirt”. This captures a wide range of routine activities that require municipal water staff to submit a permit application with detailed information to the department and wait for approval to perform what are clearly maintenance tasks, such as stone revetment.

In addition to unnecessarily tying up the resources of municipal staff, this requirement also delays projects that need to be completed under certain weather conditions or during certain times of the year.

COST urges your support for SB-297 to reduce administrative costs on municipalities as well as free up agency staff to focus on other more important administrative functions.

COST also recommends that a section be added to this bill to assist municipalities in expediting economic development projects by authorizing an alternative permit review process for non-transient community water systems using specially licensed engineers. This program would be modeled after the Licensed Environmental Professional Program, which has been used to assist in moving forward with brownfields remediation projects. Due to limited staffing, such applications are often bogged down, undermining local efforts to support needed economic development projects.

*COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut’s suburban and rural towns.*

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